

## Osprey at Lake Berryessa and New Melones Lake

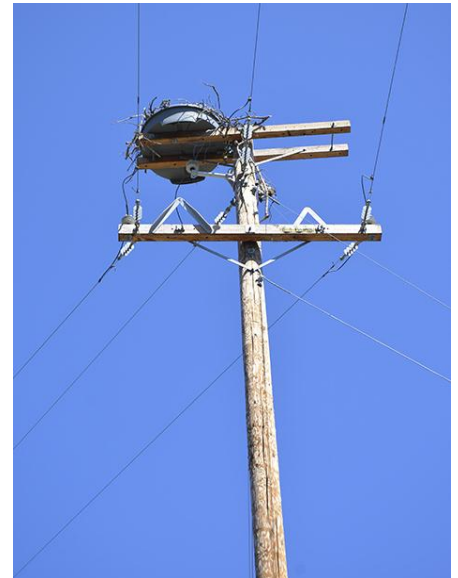


The Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), also known as the sea hawk, fish eagle or fish hawk and sometimes confused with bald eagles, can grow up to two feet long with a wingspan of up to six feet and weighing three to four pounds. Their talons and beaks are large and powerful, and their diet consists almost entirely of fish.

Osprey and owls are the only raptors whose outer toe is reversible, allowing them to grasp slippery fish with two toes in front and two behind. These birds of prey hunt for their food while in flight, using their keen vision and other senses to spot their dinner and then dive into the water from 30 to 100 feet in the air to catch it. Since the Osprey breed near freshwater lakes and live on fish, it's not surprising that many have made New Melones Lake and Lake Berryessa home.

Osprey nests are large heaps of sticks and sod that may be reused each season; some nests are known to have been used for 70 years. Ospreys generally begin breeding about age three or four, and they usually mate for life. In spring, the mating pair begins a five-month partnership to raise their young.

Osprey like to build their nests in the forks of trees, on rocky outcrops and, unfortunately, on top of utility and power poles, which increases risks for both the birds and the electric system. Pacific Gas & Electric has retrofitted several thousand utility poles, including many at New Melones and Lake Berryessa, with "bird safe" equipment and with nesting tubs and platforms to help protect migratory, threatened and endangered birds. Placement of the nesting platforms benefits the Osprey as well as PG&E, which must maintain the lines. Other nest structures at New Melones have been built by the Western Area Power Administration, and volunteers and staff have constructed nesting areas in response to rising lake levels that affected Osprey nests. To the right is a nesting tub at Lake Berryessa, and below is one at New Melones (see the bird in the middle of the nest?).



The Osprey is a beautiful raptor that was once gravely imperiled but has now undergone a tremendous resurgence, living near bodies of fresh water on all continents except Antarctica.

As may be seen in the following spectacular series of photographs taken in April 2013 at New Melones Lake by the Public Affairs Office's photographer, Winetta Owens, the Osprey is doing quite nicely, thank you, making its home and raising its young at Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs.

